WASC Senior College and University Commission

February 26, 2020

Ms. Sandra Brooks
President and Accreditation Liaison Officer
Cal Northern School of Law
1395 Ridgewood Drive, Suite 100
Chico, CA 95973

Dear President Brooks:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Cal Northern School of Law (CNSL) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting February 14, 2020. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Seeking Accreditation Visit 3 to CNSL September 4 – 6, 2019. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by CNSL prior to the Seeking Accreditation Visit 3 and the institution's November 13, 2018 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleague Ms. Martha Wilson, Director of Institutional Research. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's new status with WSCUC.

Actions

1. Receive the Seeking Accreditation Visit 3 team report
2. Grant Initial Accreditation for a period of six years
3. Allow the date of Initial Accreditation to be applied retroactively to May 10, 2019
4. Schedule the reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in spring 2025 and the Accreditation Visit in fall 2025
5. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review to begin on May 1, 2023
6. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2023 to address:
    a. Development and implementation of the new federal financial aid program.
    b. Improved JD student retention.
    c. Refinement and implementation of the enrollment management plan.
    d. Development of a succession plan.
    e. Potential impact from access to federal student aid and WSCUC accreditation.

The Commission commends CNSL in particular for the following:

1. The faculty, staff, and governing board alignment with and commitment to the institution's mission of providing an affordable, quality, and practitioner-oriented legal education.
2. A culture of inquiry and evidence-based decision-making that exemplifies a learning organization.

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3. Exemplary cumulative California Bar pass rates.
4. A commitment to developing students as ethical practitioners of the law.
5. A committee structure that is appropriate for the institution's current culture and is scalable to accommodate future growth.

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following issues:

1. Develop an effective and sustainable financial aid program informed by appropriate professional expertise (CFR 1.7, 2.13, 3.4).
2. Improve first- to second-year juris doctorate student retention (CFR 1.2, 2.10, 2.11).
3. Refine the enrollment management plan to consider best- and worst-case scenarios related to student access to federal financial aid, including support for a larger and potentially more diverse population (CFR 1.4, 3.4).
4. Develop a comprehensive succession plan for key institutional personnel (CFR 3.6, 3.8).
5. Anticipate and proactively plan for the impact of potential changes to the institution resulting from accreditation and access to federal financial aid (CFR 4.7).

In taking this action to grant Initial Accreditation, the Commission confirms that CNSL has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the institutional review process for Initial Accreditation conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, CNSL should strive for ongoing improvement with adherence to all Standards of Accreditation and their associated CFRs to foster a learning environment that continuously strives for educational excellence and operational effectiveness.

CNSL must use the following statement if it wishes to describe its accreditation status publicly:

> *Cal Northern School of Law is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001.*

Federal law requires that the WSCUC address and phone number appear in your catalog.

The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by WSCUC refers to the quality of the institution as a whole. Because institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program at the institution, statements such as "this program is accredited" or "this degree is accredited" are incorrect and misleading. The phrase "fully accredited" is also to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible.

The Commission stipulates that this action encompasses the degrees offered by CNSL at the time of this action, as listed at the end of this letter as the Consolidated List of Currently Offered Degrees. Any proposed new degree programs, off-campus sites, online

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offerings, and/or changes in governance or ownership require review and approval through the Substantive Change process. Degree programs that have been reviewed and included under this action may be extended to other currently approved campuses of the institution without prior Substantive Change action. Offerings at new locations may need to go through Substantive Change approval, in accordance with the requirements stated in the Substantive Change manual.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of CNSL's governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the CNSL's website and widely distributed throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in these documents. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that Cal Northern School of Law undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while contributing to public accountability, and we thank you for your continued support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,

Jamienne S. Studley
President

JSS/mam

Cc: Reed Dasenbrock, Commission Chair
James Morgan, Board Chair
Members of the Seeking Accreditation Visit 3 team
Maureen A Maloney, Vice President

Attachment: Consolidated List of Currently Offered Degrees

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Consolidated List of Currently Offered Degrees
Cal Northern School of Law

1. Juris Doctor Degree
2. Masters in Legal Studies

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